**Cavalry Troop**

**Rotation 15-02**

**Executive Summary**

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**GENERAL**

The troop came to NTC seasoned, and had already mastered many of the basics at home station, allowing the unit to refine and operate at the graduate level while at NTC. The unit conducted tough and realistic training during NTC Rotation 15-02, which focused on Decisive Action against a hybrid threat. This training included a brigade minus combined arms live fire which included a breach, two forward passage of lines, and a joint air attack team. Training also included four distinct battle periods during Force on Force operations at the National Training Center. Despite suffering personnel shortages, new platoon leaders, a new 1SG, and an E-5 as a platoon sergeant for one of the platoons, the troop took their core knowledge from home station and quickly integrated the team. The unit continued to make improvements throughout the rotation, almost all of which were advanced AAR points. The Troop was also able to focus on their Troop Commander’s training objectives which included:

* CASEVAC
* Refine and validate SOPs and TACSOP
* Junior leader development
* Simultaneous mission command
* NAI / PIR / IR crosswalk

The rotation identified a number of strengths and weaknesses that should shape the unit’s follow on home station training. Primary areas of focus for the troop should be night maneuver, NCO involvement, indirect fire planning, and communication platforms. Doctrine, TTPs from CALL information papers, lessons learned at NTC, and past deployment experience should guide home station training.

**ISSUE**

Night maneuver and mounted night land navigation.

**DISCUSSION WITH INTEGRATED RECOMMENDATION**

The unit collectively struggled with night maneuver and night formation techniques, as well as conducting night land navigation. The M3A3 Bradley’s were more successful with their built in driver viewer enhancer (DVE). The M1151 HMMWVs did not use the DVE in order to minimize ambient light during night reconnaissance operations. With no blackout markers used during maneuver, the unit maintained excellent light discipline, but needs more practice with vehicles that only maneuver with night vision capability as opposed to thermal capability. Based on the unit’s current capability, it is recommended that when feasible, the unit spends time conducting reverse cycle operations so that it can train solely at night.

**ISSUE**

NCO involvement with planning and mission execution.

**DISCUSSION WITH INTEGRATED RECOMMENDATION**

Officers were never observed undercutting or minimizing NCO input. However, NCOs were not observed being assertive in giving input to the mission outside of CASEVAC and/or sustainment. This is not to say that the NCOs were weak or ineffective, but rather that they can and should play a much larger part in the mission planning, and execution. As a common trend, NCOs need to remain empowered. They are technical experts with a plethora of tactical knowledge and experience. As some examples, the NCO should know that the LRAS needs to be declinated and how to declinate it, or how to set up a HF radio. The NCO needs to have input during planning about the weapon system capabilities and whether the actual equipment and personnel within the troop can physically support the officer’s plan. We have a strong NCO corps that needs to be maintained and not shrink away as we transition to a semi-garrison army again. Finally, like an old saying goes from the platoon sergeant to the platoon leader, “I own the platoon before LD, you have them after LD”.

**ISSUE**

Indirect fires planning.

**DISCUSSION WITH INTEGRATED RECOMMENDATION**

This unit had a solid base of training for indirect fires execution. They consistently called for targets at the maximum range of their optics, understood declination on all optics, properly used first and last return, used tripods for their optics in the observation post, and had target location errors that were consistently under 150 meters with adjustments and effects on at least 90% of the targets they called. However, the unit struggled from troop to brigade with planning for indirect fires and air space deconfliction. The squadron and brigade fires rehearsals continually conflicted with the squadron combined arms rehearsal and timing prevented the troop commander from having the Fire Support Officer (FSO) available for the OPORD. In addition, the processing of fires, use of FSCMs, and clearance of air was not rehearsed. In order to become more effective, especially in a unit where the observer is so highly trained, the FSO, up through Brigade Aviation Element (BAE) and Air Defense Air Management (ADAM) cell, needs to work on speeding up the clearance of air and processing of fire missions. This can be done through FM / digital rehearsals, table talks, and initial planning. Additionally, the troop can support more timely fires by using tactical and technical triggers on the battlefield in order to clear air space sooner and have guns positioned and ready to fire. The unit demonstrated great competence with their observers and scouts, if they can refine their fire planning they will be extremely lethal as we saw them identify targets starting at about 30km and engage them with MLRS and artillery at approximately 19km. This is where the scouts can truly shape and affect the brigade fight.

**ISSUE**

Communication platforms.

**DISCUSSION WITH INTEGRATED RECOMMENDATION**

Optics and indirect fires are an important tool for the scout and they mean nothing if the scout cannot relay what he is seeing or call for effects from other assets. The unit’s M1068 command post was NMC and left at home station. Despite this constraint, the troop XO did an excellent job of using a HMMWV for a command post and connecting a COM201 antenna and placing it on higher surrounding ground. However, that is not enough in terrain such as NTC or Afghanistan. The unit came with some knowledge of HF radio, but failed to exploit and capitalize on the training opportunity. Primary methods of communication were FM, which was occasionally jammed, and FBCB2. Observation posts need to be familiar with various field expedient antenna techniques, as well as alternate communication platforms such as HF or TACSAT. Communication is the lifeline of a scout. Recommend additional training on these alternate communication platforms to the point that every Soldier in the formation feels it is muscle memory.

## REFERENCES

**FM 3-20.96** *Reconnaissance and Cavalry Squadron*

**FM 3-20.961** *Reconnaissance and Cavalry Troop*

**ATP 3-09.30** *Techniques for Observed Fire*

**ADRP 3-0** *Operations*

**ATTP 5-0.1** *Commander and Staff Officer Guide*

**CALL Newsletter No. 95-7** *Functions of a TOC*

**CONCLUSION**

The troop capitalized on the opportunity to train their unit at the National Training Center. They demonstrated that excelling in the basics will result in superior second and third order effects on the battlefield. Their strong focus on planning, flexible employment of formations, observation post employment, and the proper use of optics, proved that cavalry squadrons are the eyes and ears of the brigade and shape the fight for everyone else in the brigade. As they transition back to home station and their pending deployment, training needs to continue with a focus on the discussed items above. The troop is certainly better than when they arrived and numerous leaders and Soldiers were grown and developed during the rotation, allowing them to focus on fine tuned training at home station and during deployment.

**INTERNET ACCESS TO REFERENCES**

CALL products require access through .mil computers and an identity check at

<http://call.army.mil/>. You must follow links to the “DoD Personnel Area”.

Most doctrinal publications are available at the Army Training Information Architecture- Migrated (ATIA-M) site <http://www.train.army.mil/>. Access to certain references requires an Army Knowledge Online account and password.

Best practices and trends observed at NTC by the Cobra Team can be located on milSuite at <https://www.milsuite.mil/book/groups/ntc-cobra-team> .